

Century Marks

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"Quit worrying about corroborating your sources—it's not as if anyone's going to take all this literally."

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Euripides for kids: Marva Collins founded the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago for children who had been rejected in school for bad behavior or for their seeming inability to learn. At first she held classes in her home, and she struggled financially. But under her tutelage, children labeled unteachable were reading Shakespeare, Emerson and Euripides by the fourth grade. Now there are Marva Collins schools in several states, and educators come from all over the world to observe her methods. The key to Collins's success: instilling in children confidence in themselves and the ability to imagine a better future (Tal Ben-Shahar, *Happier*, McGraw-Hill).

A magazine's mercy: Around 80,000 copies of a new issue of the *Sun* magazine were ready for distribution when the editors of the magazine discovered a serious mistake: the issue included the name of an author who was in jail and had requested that his name be withheld because he feared reprisal from other inmates. The editors considered their options, including going through all the issues and covering the author's name with ink or cutting it out with scissors. They also considered

mailing the magazine and just hoping that no other inmate would see that article. Then the editors thought about what they'd want done for themselves. They reckoned that though the prisoner "was no saint—he was on death row, after all . . . maybe saints don't need our mercy as much as sinners do." The magazine took on the cost of reprinting the entire issue (*Sun*, March).

Golden Rules: Playwright George Bernard Shaw detected a flaw in the Golden Rule: "Do not do unto others as you would have them do unto you," he said; "their tastes may be different." The late Richard Graham had another take on the Golden Rule: "You shouldn't do unto others what you wouldn't want done to you" (*Washington Monthly*, January/February/March).

Turn around: Ted Turner, who once called Christianity "a religion for losers," has launched a joint initiative with Lutherans and United Methodists in the U.S. to raise \$200 million to fight malaria in Africa. Best known globally for creating the Cable News Network, the 69-year-old Turner established the anti-malaria project through his United Nations Foundation. The CNN founder made the announcement at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, flanked by Methodist and Lutheran leaders. Turner said he had become more tolerant of religion and regretted anything negative he has said in the past. "I'm sure God, wherever he is, wants to see us get along with one another and love one another," he said (ENI).

Light in dark corners: For many people newspapers are being replaced by Internet sources of news and commentary, most of which are driven by partisan interests. That development doesn't worry media analyst Eric Alterman. He points out that newspapers in many other democratic countries represent particular political interests, and those countries have more vigorous political debates than the U.S. does. Alterman does worry about whether Internet reporters will have the resources that have enabled newspaper reporters to investigate wrongdoing and bring atrocities to light (*New Yorker*, March 31).

Wal-Mart update: Most likely due to the negative publicity it received, Wal-Mart has decided not to collect the \$400,000-plus it won in a lawsuit against Deborah Shank, a former employee. Shank, who is confined to a nursing home due to brain damage from an accident involving a truck, was awarded a large sum of money in a lawsuit against the trucking company. The proceeds were put in a trust for her long-term care. But Wal-Mart successfully sued Shank to recover what it had spent for medical care covered through its employee health plan (AP).

Initial impact: Success or failure in life may have something to do with one's initials. A study of major-league baseball players going back to 1913 showed that players with a first or last name starting with K—the symbol for a strikeout—were slightly more likely to strike out than their peers. Another study indicated that MBA students with a name starting with a C or D tended to end up with a lower grade-point average. And law students with a name starting with A or B were more likely to attend higher-ranked law schools than those with a name starting with C or D (*Atlantic*, April).

Rainbow scholars: After this year the number of high school graduates in the U.S. will slowly decline until 2015. Meanwhile, the number of Hispanic and Asian students is expected to grow rapidly. By the year 2022 almost half of all high school graduates will be from minority groups, and a quarter will be Hispanic. Many of these students, if they go to college, will be the first in their family to do so (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 28).

Progressive revelation: Islamic theologian Mona Siddiqui, who has been involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue in Britain, admits that the Qur'an gives husbands the right to beat their wives. But she says Muslims can't "hijack" one verse from the Qur'an to justify oppression of women and ignore the larger principles of their faith. "We have to say this is wrong," she says. She also acknowledges that *jihad* has traditionally been interpreted as sanctioning the use of violence to advance Islam, but she says "there is no room for that kind of thinking any more." The Qur'an may be the final revelation of God's will, according to Muslims, but Siddiqui says that doesn't mean Muslims have the final interpretation of the Qur'an. (*Third Way*, March)

Culture of philanthropy: An editorial in the *Tablet* (March 15) affirms that all wealth comes from God, according to Catholic social teaching. Even if wealth is held by the few, its purpose is for the benefit of the many, especially the poor. The only real question is the practical one: How much sharing of wealth should come about through individual initiative and how much through government taxation? The editorial allows that these two approaches aren't mutually exclusive, and it commends the American tradition of philanthropy that, for example, is combating AIDS and malaria in Africa. "Britain has its philanthropists too but not such a culture of philanthropy, and the nation is the poorer for it."

The day the music died? Responding to a complaint about loud music, police from Waterford township in Michigan raided the sanctuary of Faith Baptist Church during

a service. The church has recently filed suit in a U.S. district court against the township for conspiracy to deny their church freedom of speech and expression and the right to religious practice (*Detroit News*, March 12).